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A DIFFICULTY IN ART-PHOTOGRAPHY

BY T. DWIGHT PARKINSON

Illustrated from photographs by A. N. Lindenmuth.

WITHOUT venturing into argument, it may be observed that the first effort of photography, after a success had been made of portraiture, was to reproduce buildings and landscapes, and for a long time the interest and object of the operator was technical or commercial rather than artistic. Hence Ruskin's outburst, that he would rather have a sketch of a single tuft of daisies, or something equally small, than a photograph of the girdle of the earth made on the equator, had a basis which now even that grouchy philosopher must confess no longer exists to provoke him. Everyone will admit that, granted the best technical result, a photograph of a landscape may now be made which will approach, in the estimation of most persons, a monotint drawing of the same scene under similar conditions. It is true that the credit lies with the man equally if not more than with the instrument; but that is true of the sketch or painting.

But the composing of groups before the camera is a different and undoubtedly higher undertaking. Men are regarded as better than machines because they have brains and can think. But in some situations men, and especially women, are the



From a photograph by A. N. Lindenmuth

FAGIN'S DEN: AN ILLUSTRATION FOR "OLIVER TWIST"



From a photograph by A. N. Lindenmuth

THE FAIRY TALE OF "SLEEPING BEAUTY"

better for not thinking, or at any rate for not discriminating; and one of these situations is when they are placed before a camera to help tell a story in the dumb show of a genre composition, or some sort of a personification. Then self-consciousness stiffens limbs that are never so willing, and stamps the countenance with a certain anxiety, though it may be so faintly that the all-revealing lens alone detects it. This subjective difficulty is so great that Mr. Lindenmuth deserves no little praise for his success in approaching naturalness of expression in his figures, the face of the woman in the tall chair being especially noteworthy in this respect.